



## D3.4 Podcast Episodes x6

**30/06/2024**

***BABLE GmbH***

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Description of the related task and the deliverable. Extract from DoA & GA	<p><b>T3.3 Knowledge generation and promotion of successful initiatives (Leader: BAB, Duration: M3-M16, Contributors: all)</b></p> <p>As an extension to T3.1 and T3.2, T3.3 will generate easy-accessible formats for transferring key knowledge and awareness of successful initiatives on a higher level, targeting a larger volume of SMCs across the regions. Here, podcast episodes and Medium blog articles will be prepared to exploit simpler, more agile ways of knowledge generation and promotion, both locally and across regions. These activities (either articles, podcasts or both) will be presented to the ecosystems at least every second month, will involve both SMEs and SMCs as part of the content and will be distributed through both internal project channels, e.g. the project newsletter (see WP6) as well as through external partnerships, e.g. through the Smart Cities Marketplace Forum, to ensure maximum dissemination and impact.</p>		
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PU	Public	<b>x</b>
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## About SMCNetZero

SMCNetZero brings together six successful urban innovation initiatives in Europe with seven (7) regional and Pan European networks and their partners to create a **Satellite Network of innovation actors** to support public sector representatives from Small and Medium-sized cities (SMCs), SMEs, academia, NGOs, and investors across Europe to **facilitate decarbonisation in SMCs**.

The SMCNetZero consortium is composed of:

- BABLE Smart Cities**, Germany (BAB)
- ODRAZ - Održivi razvoj zajednice**, Croatia (ODZ)
- Smart City Cluster**, Spain (SCC)
- Southern Regional Assembly**, Ireland (SRA)
- BLOXHUB**, Denmark (BXH)
- WE BUILD DENMARK**, Denmark (WBD)
- UrbanDNA**, United Kingdom (UDNA)

This project is unique in that its diverse consortium partners and broad commitment from target stakeholders in the Satellite Network ensure **focus in regions with less innovation capacity**, with written confirmed commitment from nearly 100 innovation actors at the proposal stage, to participate in the activities- including an emphasis on largely underrepresented regions and stakeholders.

The project will leverage its diverse Satellite Network to:

- Gain an in-depth understanding of SMC needs and barriers towards achieving Net Zero emissions.
- Raise awareness and simplify access to existing successful initiatives supporting decarbonisation.
- Support matchmaking between supply and demand sides by linking SMEs, researchers, and investors with SMCs.
- Help identify and open access to funding for enabling innovation deployment in SMCs currently underrepresented in the European innovation ecosystem.

SMCNetZero's vision is to **create and strengthen local innovation ecosystems' interrelations in SMCNetZero regions** through brokerage and knowledge-building activities as well as digital resources to increase capacity **for planning, deploying, and**

**scaling up of decarbonisation solutions**, overall focusing on increasing the inclusivity of these innovation ecosystems and minimizing existing innovation divides.

To achieve this vision, SMCNetZero has the following primary strategic objectives:

- Open up opportunities and stimulate the dissemination of information and exchange of knowledge on best practices on decarbonization for SMCs (and as a result, SMEs).
- Increase implementation prospects between providers of zero-emission solutions and public authorities from SMCs by designing, developing and providing a digital space and accompanying toolkit for collaborating, learning and networking.
- Identify and engage innovation leaders from the public and private sectors from “strong” innovator regions and “moderate” to “modest” innovator regions within the project’s focus countries.
- Design and deploy engagement and knowledge-building activities for ensuring wide participation for SMCNetZero and maximum impact.
- Facilitate the understanding and implications of the implementation and scale-up of innovation projects in SMCs.

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## Introduction

As part of the SMCNetZero project, a series of podcast episodes have been produced and hosted by "Smart in the City - The BABLE Podcast." These episodes align with the project's mission to facilitate and accelerate decarbonisation in small and medium-sized cities (SMCs) across Europe by sharing insights, best practices, and success stories from various urban innovation initiatives. Each episode features interviews with key stakeholders, including city officials, project leaders, and industry experts, providing a comprehensive look at the challenges and solutions in achieving net-zero emissions.

These podcasts are an integral part of the Knowledge Generation and Promotion of Successful Initiatives work package (T3.3). By leveraging accessible formats like podcast episodes and blog articles, the goal is to disseminate valuable knowledge and raise awareness of successful decarbonisation initiatives. This approach ensures that a larger audience, including SMC representatives, SMEs, academia, NGOs, and investors, can benefit from the experiences and insights shared.

Below are summaries of each podcast episode along with selected quotes that highlight the key points discussed, providing a snapshot of the valuable discussions and insights gained through these conversations.



### Podcast Episode #1 – SMCNetZero: "Supporting SMCs in their Decarbonization Journey"

In this inaugural episode of the SMCNetZero series, the host, Tamlyn Shimizu, introduces the project and its objectives. She is joined by three key project partners: Nikita Shetty from BABLE, Graham Colclough from UrbanDNA, and Rebecca Walsh from the Southern Regional Assembly. The discussion covers the project's inspiration, goals, and the unique challenges faced by small and medium-sized cities (SMCs) in their journey towards decarbonisation.

Nikita Shetty explains the project's focus on creating a network of networks to support SMCs with tailored resources and knowledge sharing. Graham Colclough emphasises the importance of addressing the practical challenges faced by smaller cities, such as limited capacity, funding, and access to the market. Rebecca Walsh highlights the significance of best practices and capacity building to overcome these challenges.

**Graham Colclough:** *"The answer's really simple. SMCs, small and medium cities represent the largest portion of the market, so we neglect them at our peril. Most people in Europe, in fact, most people in the world don't live in big cities."*

The episode also delves into the importance of communication, practical solutions, and the role of digital platforms in facilitating collaboration among SMCs, SMEs, and investors.



## Podcast Episode #2 – SMCNetZero Project: What Lessons Can Transfer from Larger Cities to SMCs?

In this episode, Tamlyn Shimizu interviews Maria Vassilakou, Urban Strategist and Founder of Vienna Solutions, who is also a member of the EU Horizon Missions Experts Board on Smart and Climate Neutral Cities. Maria shares her journey from Greece to Austria, her tenure as Vienna's Vice Mayor, and her insights on urban planning and decarbonisation.

Maria discusses Vienna's systematic approach to decarbonisation, highlighting the city's challenge with gas dependency and the importance of systemic changes such as energy zoning and promoting carbon-neutral new constructions. She emphasises the value of long-term plans, community grants, and polycentric development, suggesting that these strategies can be adapted by small and medium-sized cities (SMCs).

**Maria Vassilakou:** *"The toughest challenge that we're all facing across Europe is how do you decarbonise buildings with small owner-occupied flats where people that own the flat live in the flat and are most probably facing challenges in accessing loans."*

Maria identifies key challenges for SMCs, such as limited decision-making power, capacity, and ability to attract investment, and advocates for collaboration and resource sharing among SMCs to mitigate these issues. She also underscores the role of SMEs in supporting local



decarbonisation efforts and the need for structured frameworks to foster effective local ecosystem collaboration.

**Maria Vassilakou:** *"If you want something to happen, to really happen, then you need people who are responsible for this. So you need to allocate a team for that. You need space for that. You need basic rules and processes."*

Finally, Maria shares an inspiring story from Kalamata, a small city in Greece, which successfully involved its local community in developing a climate action plan, illustrating the power of bottom-up approaches in driving radical change.



## Podcast Episode #3 – SMCNetZero Project: Cascais - Small City, Big Impact

In this episode, Tamlyn Shimizu speaks with João Dinis, the head of the Climate Action Office at Cascais Ambiente, to explore the decarbonisation efforts and sustainability initiatives in the seaside city of Cascais, Portugal.

João, a fifth-generation resident of Cascais, provides an in-depth look at the city's environmental strategies and how technology and governance work together to enhance climate action.

**João Dinis:** *"Technology is a very useful tool. It does bring out innovation but it only is useful if you have a good governance model."*

João describes Cascais Ambiente's role in promoting biodiversity, designing urban green areas, and implementing smart city solutions, such as the smart waste collection system. He emphasises the importance of co-creation and involving citizens in decision-making processes to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility.

**João Dinis:** *"Small is beautiful. Cascais is a small and beautiful... It's easier to work with communities, and when it comes to working in communities in public governance, such as ourselves, small is easier to test out and to have a bigger impact."*

The discussion highlights the main challenges Cascais faces in achieving net-zero emissions, particularly in buildings and mobility. João shares examples like the free public bus transportation system and renewable energy promotions. He also talks about the city's

involvement in European projects like Klima Borough, which aims to address procurement challenges through collaborative innovation. João concludes by stressing the need for empathy and active participation from citizens to drive meaningful change and decarbonisation.



## Podcast Episode #4 – SMCNetZero Project: Social Tech Projects - AI for Urban Decarbonisation

In this episode, Tamlyn Shimizu interviews Luca Leomanni, the CTO and co-founder of Social Tech Projects. The focus is on innovative approaches to infrastructure maintenance, specifically through AI and smart technologies, to help cities proactively manage their infrastructure and decarbonisation efforts.

Luca discusses his work with Social Tech Projects, a Danish company that supports startups with technologies aimed at achieving social impact. Social Tech Projects focuses on three main areas: enabling startups, citizen engagement, and sustainable mobility. Luca elaborates on their AI road system, which provides city managers with data to optimise cycling infrastructure, enhancing safety and encouraging sustainable transport.

The conversation also touches on the collaboration with the European Space Agency (ESA) and how their technologies, like the Galileo and Copernicus satellite systems, have helped improve data accuracy for urban infrastructure management. Luca stresses the importance of technology as an enabler, ensuring that it serves practical needs and facilitates sustainable choices.

**Luca Leomanni:** *"Technology should act as an enabler, so we should always keep in mind the reasons why we are using the technology in the first place."*

Finally, Luca shares his inspiration from the city of Oulu, Finland, where efficient cycling infrastructure enables citizens to bike even during snowy winters, highlighting the potential for similar initiatives in other cities.



## Podcast Episode #5 – SMCNetZero Project: Križevci - Energy Independence and Citizen Engagement

In this episode, Tamlyn Shimizu interviews Mario Rajn, the Mayor of Križevci, Croatia. They discuss the town’s efforts towards sustainability, focusing on energy independence and citizen engagement. Mario shares the historical context of Križevci, a city with over 770 years of history, and the journey towards achieving net-zero emissions.

**Mario Rajn:** *"From 2017, we were fully assured and fully aware that the biggest challenge would be to accompany and get citizens involved in this whole energy transition."*

Mario highlights the city’s strategy to become energy-independent by 2030 by leveraging locally available renewable resources. He emphasizes the importance of involving citizens in the energy transition process, citing successful crowdfunding campaigns for photovoltaic projects and the establishment of the first local energy cooperative in Croatia, KLIK. The cooperative has played a crucial role in educating and engaging the community in renewable energy initiatives.

The discussion also covers various challenges and innovative solutions implemented in Križevci, such as the creation of urban gardens during the COVID-19 pandemic and the use of a mobile app for better communication with citizens. Mario stresses the significance of maintaining a strong relationship with citizens and prioritizing their involvement in all major initiatives.

**Mario Rajn:** *"A Smart City has nothing to do with AI or sensors. The city is smart when children can walk and cycle freely and safely, and technology is only a bonus."*



## Podcast Episode #6 – SMCNetZero: Insights & Next Steps for Net-Zero Small and Medium-Sized Cities

In this concluding episode of the SMCNetZero series, Melike Nur Ülsever hosts the discussion with project partners Clara Plata Rios, Project Director at Smart City Cluster, Spain, and

Goran Lampelj, Project Coordinator at ODRAZ - Sustainable Community Development, Croatia. The episode provides a comprehensive overview of the project's achievements, challenges, and future directions.

Clara and Goran reflect on the highlights of the project, such as the in-person meeting in Copenhagen and the successful development of the digital forum and training modules. They discuss the tangible and intangible benefits of the project, emphasising the strengthened network of experts and cities across Europe and the peer-to-peer learning experiences facilitated by the project.

**Clara Plata Rios:** *"We have created a beautiful network of experts all along Europe and of cities as well. So for me, that's one of the main achievements of the project at this moment."*

Goran highlights the importance of the roadmap developed during the project, which provides clear steps for small and medium-sized cities to progress towards climate neutrality. Both guests stress the need for continued collaboration and the utilisation of the Digital Forum to maintain momentum and support for SMCs in their decarbonisation efforts.

**Goran Lampelj:** *"Basically, a roadmap shows you, yes, you are similar more than you think you are. And I think this is a really good tool which helps and enables the cities to start this journey or to continue the journey."*

The discussion also touches on the unique challenges faced by SMCs, such as limited capacity and resources, and the importance of engaging citizens in the transition to net-zero. Clara and Goran emphasise that the success of such projects relies on finding the right people who are committed to driving change in their cities.

## Episodes Impact

**Time Period Tracked:** August 30, 2023 to June 27, 2024

### **Episode #42: "SMCNetZero: Supporting SMCs in their Decarbonisation Journey"**

- **Published:** August 30, 2023
- **Listens:** 103
- **Top Countries:** Spain, USA, Germany

### **Episode #51: "SMCNetZero Project: What Lessons Can Transfer from Larger Cities to SMCs?"**

- **Published:** November 15, 2023
- **Listens:** 86
- **Top Countries:** Germany, Spain, USA

### **Episode #62: "SMCNetZero Project: Cascais - Small City, Big Impact"**

- **Published:** January 31, 2024
- **Listens:** 77
- **Top Countries:** Germany, UK, Portugal

### **Episode #72: "SMCNetZero Project: Social Tech Projects - AI for Urban Decarbonisation"**

- **Published:** April 17, 2024
- **Listens:** 65
- **Top Countries:** Germany, USA, Italy

### **Episode #77: "SMCNetZero Project: Križevci - Energy Independence and Citizen Engagement"**

- **Published:** May 22, 2024
- **Listens:** 53
- **Top Countries:** USA, Germany, UK

### **Episode #81: "SMCNetZero: Insights & Next Steps for Net-Zero Small and Medium-Sized Cities"**

- **Published:** June 26, 2024
- **Listens:** 26
- **Top Countries:** USA, Germany, Netherlands

## Conclusion

The SMCNetZero podcast series, hosted by "Smart in the City - The BABLE Podcast," has been instrumental in disseminating valuable knowledge, best practices, and success stories from various urban innovation initiatives. Each episode has highlighted the unique challenges and opportunities faced by SMCs, providing insights from key stakeholders, including city officials, project leaders, and industry experts.

As the SMCNetZero project concludes, the momentum built through these initiatives must be sustained. The knowledge shared and connections made through the podcast series and other project activities will continue to serve as valuable assets for cities striving towards a sustainable, decarbonised future. Importantly, the podcast episodes will remain available for listening, ensuring that the insights and discussions continue to inspire and inform even as the project itself comes to an end.